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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: rethinking and strengthening social
development in the contemporary world**

Statement submitted by UDISHA, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Changing Perspective on Education: A Tool to Enhance Employment for Strengthening Social Development

Introduction:

Social development is an encyclopaedic paradigm encapsulating all realms of the betterment of quality of human lives. It goes beyond mere economic improvement, as it traverses into the sphere of overall well-being of a nation which becomes possible over a long period via sustained, institutionalized and comprehensive mechanisms developed.

The concept of a Developmental State has the cardinal element of betterment of the quality of lives people lead. This could be interpreted as provision of educational and health amenities, augmentation in the living standards of the people, empowerment of women and children, safe and secure surroundings, less polluted and preserved environment, freedoms exercised by people and equitable access to resources obtained by all irrespective of their caste, class, sex or race. It has been realized that social development can be strengthened through interlinkages, including between education/employment and poverty, labour standards, employment and social protection.

Moreover, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's mission has primarily been to initiate peacebuilding measures and intercultural dialogue, poverty alleviation and sustainable development with education as one of its principal activities to achieve this aim. The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), being a coordinator and central forum for discussing international economic and social issues, is responsible for promoting higher standards of living, full employment, and economic and social progress, providing the best platform to discuss the changing perspective on education and hence, a tool to enhance employment.

Objectives and Purpose:

The objective and purpose of this statement is to underline a two pronged approach highlighting the role of the two most important stakeholders — Government Organizations and Civil Society, especially NGOs like Udisha, taking into account the present work being done and its effect on the social development pattern.

The definition of education is expanding and the methodologies adopted are changing. There are efforts from all to make it a harbinger of development for the masses; especially in India, which has the world's largest youth population of 356 million 10-24 year-olds, in order to maximize the demographic dividend.

The statement will explain the role of the two above mentioned stakeholders in helping youth with the right policies and investments in human capital, empowering young people to drive economic and social development and boost per capita incomes as suggested by the United Nations Population Fund report.¹ It aims to highlight the approach that empowerment through education and employment can

¹ UNFPA, *State of World Population 2014: The Power of 1.8 Billion* (UNFPA, 2014), 126.

help prevent abuse and violence against children and youth and vice versa, thus strengthening social protection.

It is being increasingly recognised that economic wellbeing and productive efficiencies can be realized with higher intellectual and professional human capabilities. The development of human resources is extremely important in today's competitive environment. In the past two decades the concept of development has evolved in this direction, moving from income to human resource development. An economic boom is not sufficient to guarantee a good life. This is the reason for the marked shift from the welfare approach of education to the rights-based approach, providing the foundation for the right to dignity.

To meet these challenges, the Government of India's endeavour has been to achieve "Education for All" through Sarva Shiksha Mission, with an inclusive approach to achieve the goals of universal access and student retention, bridging of gender and social gaps in enrolment levels and enhancement of learning levels of all children. Special emphasis is also given for promotion of girls' education. Mahila Samakhya, which has a special focus on the Educationally Backward Blocks is a unique, process-oriented programme which has demonstrated ways of empowering rural poor and marginalised women. The two newly added programmes of 2015 "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" and "Sukanya Samridhi Account" in a bid to prevent female foeticide and encourage birth and education of girls and tackle the low child sex ratio of 918 girls for 1000 boys has been a step forward to include civil society in social development, making the role of NGOs more important.

Education, comprising primary and upper primary levels, forms the foundation of the education pyramid. Hence, to strengthen this foundation and to achieve the goal of universal access to quality education for all, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 has been implemented.

Specific Accomplishments of the Organization:

Udisha, established in 1997, was awarded the 2011 International Prize for Innovative Prevention of Abuse and Violence against Children and Youth by Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF) in recognition of work done to prevent of child abuse over the last ten years. We recognise the need to raise awareness against social crimes like child abuse, child labour, sexual harassment and rape, and to sensitize and train children and youth in self-defence and thus contribute to making the world a better place for children to live, learn and grow.

Udisha also focuses on supporting the governmental efforts by creating awareness, desire and skill (especially vocational) among children and youth. It has provided employment through free job-oriented training to hundreds of unemployed youth in the areas of computing, web design, beauty and health care, garment drafting, construction and security under the schemes of the Indian Government and NGOs.

We believe that extracurricular activities are essentials for well-rounded development of children. Udisha is the national branch of Caretakers of Environment International; a Netherlands based NGO working for environmental education in secondary schools. The students and teachers have participated in Global Environmental Youth Conventions held in Lund, Sweden, Torino, Italy and UAE, Dubai. Many seminars, poster painting competitions, debates and walks have

been organized for environment al protection and conservation of energy in Delhi, India adjoining states for the last 14 years.

The first Udisha Rotary Model United Nations Conference was organized in 2015. Around 200 delegates attended the meeting consisting of different UN Committees for three days and deliberated on various international issues. The efforts of Udisha are multifaceted. It not only supports Make in India programme, Digital India Program and skill development policies of the Government for youth employment, but also tries to make an honest contribution to these in preventing unemployment. We wish to promote the Changing Perspective on Education as a Tool to Enhance Employment for Strengthening of Social Development.

Challenges Ahead:

There is always scope to rethink and strengthen social development. Development is a complex process and there is no fool-proof method. The Gandhian Model of development explains that Machinery has its place; it has come to stay. However, it must not be allowed to displace necessary human labour. If we think about it from the developing economies perspective, it can help to include human resources as a part of social development, which can solve existing issues and support the UN's initiative for sustainable development. Skill development for finding employment is a priority of the Indian Government, and it will be our endeavour to establish Skill Development Centres of Excellence to contribute to sustainable development, which is integral to social development.

The role of governments and NGOs can also be expanded. In the future, Udisha wishes to continue with the coalition partnership of WWSF for their campaigns on prevention of child abuse and empowerment of rural women. It would also continue to collaborate with other NGOs like Caretakers of Environment International/Netherlands, CIVICUS, International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse Neglect and Taking IT Global as Associate Member.

Conclusion:

The post-2015 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development faces the challenge of adopting a new approach to international and national development — one that addresses the multiple interlinked global challenges of poverty eradication, environmental sustainability, economic equity, gender equality, climate change, resilience, and equitable distribution of resources, human rights and inequality. We stand by India's commitment to the objective of social development and social sustainability and also that the post-2015 development agenda should contribute to the shaping of equitable, just and growth-led sustainable social development. The preparedness would demand increased investment in human capacity, resource mobilisation, transition to a green economy and infusion of knowledge and new technology in implementation.

It would be our endeavour to focus on poverty eradication through education and employment, environmental sustainability and protection of women and children through various ongoing and planned programs. We urge other members to share their experiences of social development. We are always willing to share our policies, knowledge and experiences to rethink and strengthen the social development.